

attractive writer of the period. His object throughout is to blacken the characters of the Emperors who persecuted the Christian Church, and he does not scruple to distort their actions, pervert their motives, and even invent, with well calculated malice, stories to their discredit. Lactantius knows, or pretends to know, all that takes place even in the most secret recesses of the palace; he recounts all that passes at the most confidential conferences; and with consummate artistry he throws in circumstantial details and touches of local colour which give an appearance of truth, but are really the most convincing proofs of falsehood. Lactantius represents the abdication of Diocletian as the act of an old man, shattered in health, and even in mind, by a distressing malady sent by Heaven as the just punishment of his crimes, lie depicts him cowering in tears before the impatient insolence of Galerius, now peremptorily clamouring for the succession with threats of civil war. They discuss who shall be the new Caesars, "Whom shall we appoint?"* asks Diocletian* ^a Severus," says Galerius. "What ? " says the other, "that drunken sot of a dancer who turns night into day and day into night?" " He is worthy," replies Galerius, " for he has proved a faithful general, and I have sent him to Maximum to be invested.* "Well, well/* says the old man, " who is the second choice?¹* " He is here," says Galerius, indicating his nephew, a young semi-barbarian named Maximin Daza. " Why, who is this you offer me? " " lie is my kinsman,⁰ is the reply. Then said Diocletian, with a groan, " These are not fit men to whom to